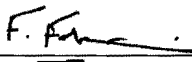

A Social History of the Muncie Public Library, 1827-1904

An Honors Thesis (HON 499)

by

Ryan W. Shrack

Dr. Frank Felsenstein

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Abstract

Currently, the Muncie Public Library and its branches are facing tough economic hardships. Multiple library buildings have or will be closed during 2009 due to a lack of adequate funding. Even the downtown Carnegie Library faces an uncertain future. The purpose of this dissertation is to tell the story of the Muncie Public Library from before its creation to the completion of the Carnegie Library. First, I give a history of Muncie and Delaware County from the early 1800s to the beginning of the twentieth century. After this, I discuss the libraries that were in operation before the creation of the official Muncie Public Library in the 1870s. Finally, I talk about the construction of the Carnegie Library and conclude with a brief discussion of the *What Middletown Read* Project and how that is helping historians, sociologists, and others understand what types of books and genres the citizens of Muncie were reading over one hundred years ago and how the public library played a role in society. I also relate how Muncie's progressive manner in the late nineteenth century played a role in the creation of the Muncie Public Library.

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank Dr. Frank Felsenstein and Dr. James Connolly for advising me on this project. They have been most helpful in assisting me in the completion of this project. Both of these men are great examples of professors who really care about the success of their students and have been exceptional mentors to me.

Preface

I have always loved going to the library and have always loved books. During my Spring 2007 semester at Ball State University, I enrolled in Dr. Frank Felsenstein's *History of the Book* Honors College colloq. I found the class fascinating and was particularly interested in the *What Middletown Read* Project that Dr. Felsenstein was working on. Upon learning that library ledgers from the Muncie Public Library dating from the late nineteenth century had been discovered and were being analyzed to help ascertain what citizens in Muncie were reading over one hundred years ago, I became curious as to how the library itself was organized in the first place. I wanted to know how the city of Muncie had developed its own library.

I met with Dr. Felsenstein and discussed my interest in the history of the Muncie Public Library in early 2008. I decided that I wanted to do my Senior Honors thesis on this subject and, with the help from both Dr. Felsenstein and Dr. James Connolly, have been able to write this dissertation on the history of the Muncie Public Library, from before its creation to the completion of the Carnegie Library in 1904.

The Muncie Public Library has had a storied existence. Currently, due to the recent economic downturns in the local and national economies, the Muncie Public Library network has been forced to close down multiple facilities and faces an uncertain future. The history of the Muncie Public Library deserves attention as one of the earliest public educational and recreational institutions in all of Delaware County and the city of Muncie. This dissertation looks at the history of the Muncie Public Library from before its creation to the construction and completion of the Carnegie Library in the early 1900s. First, a history of Muncie and Delaware County is presented to assist the reader in establishing how Muncie was settled in the early 1800s and became a thriving, vibrant, and progressive city at the beginning of the twentieth century. After the history of Muncie and Delaware County, the libraries that were established before the founding of the official Muncie Public Library are discussed. Finally, a brief history of the Carnegie Library Program and how Muncie obtained its own Carnegie Library are addressed.

It is important to discuss the history of Muncie and Delaware County because it is a crucial part in understanding how the Muncie Public Library was organized. By understanding how Muncie grew, both economically and in population, helps one understand the progressive nature of the city's library movement from its beginning to the construction of a prestigious Carnegie Library. Muncie started out as a small agricultural town and grew into a large industrial city. The economic boom that Muncie experienced directly impacted the development of the library. During the latter-half of the nineteenth century, the citizens of Muncie wanted to improve their city and having a functioning public library was one of the institutions that marked a successful modern city.

Delaware County is located in East Central Indiana. Indiana was admitted as the nineteenth state in the United States on December 11, 1816.¹ After the state was organized, the population of the state continued to grow and new counties were carved out by the state legislature. The creation of Delaware County took place on January 26, 1827.² The small village of Muncietown was established as the county seat. One of the earliest European settlers to the area was a man named Goldsmith C. Gilbert. Prior to the arrival of Gilbert, the area of Muncietown was inhabited by members of the Delaware tribe. Many of them left in the early 1820s due to the Treaty of St. Mary's, which had been signed in 1818.³ The treaty ceded the Delaware's land in Indiana and Ohio to the United States, while the government promised to give them "\$4,000 and suitable land west of the Mississippi River."⁴ In 1825, Gilbert, who operated a trading post, was attacked by some local Native Americans. During the attack, Gilbert's wife was injured and, as punishment, Gilbert forced the Native Americans to pay \$2,000.⁵ Gilbert used a portion of this money to buy a large plot of land. On this plot of land, Gilbert built a trading house and a new log cabin for his family. By 1827, the year that Muncietown was designated as the county seat of Delaware County, three other European families had settled in the area.

When Gilbert and the other founding families settled the area, they called their village "Muncietown." This name was derived from the local Native American group called the Munsee, or Wolf, which was a division of the Delaware tribe that had settled in the area after migrating from Ohio.⁶ After Muncietown became the county seat, three of the four original

¹ James H. Madison, *The Indiana Way: A State History*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 54.

² Althea L. Stoeckel and Ross S. Johnson, ed., *Delaware County, Indiana 1827-1850, The Pioneer Period*, (Muncie: Ball State University, 1975), 3.

³ Stoeckel, 10.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Stoeckel, 15.

⁶ Ibid.

landowners, Gilbert, Lemuel G. Jackson, and William Brown made donations of their land to the county. These original land donations united in the center to form the public square.⁷ The public square was set aside for the construction of future county buildings. In 1833, *The Indiana Gazetteer* gave the following description of Muncietown:

Muncietown, a post town, and the seat of justice of Delaware County. It is situated on the south bank of the White River, on an elevation of about thirty feet above the bed of the river. It is laid out on an oblong square. The four principal streets are sixty feet wide, the others are forty-five, and all crossing each other at right angles. It contains about three hundred inhabitants, three mercantile stores, a saw mill, with a fall of eleven feet, and a sufficiency of water for almost all kinds of machinery. It also has two physicians, and a number of mechanics of various trades. The state road from the Ohio state line to Indianapolis passes through this place; also a state road from Richmond to Logansport, and a county road from New Castle in Henry County, to Fort Wayne.⁸

This description paints a picture of a vibrant and industrious small town located in the wilderness of Indiana in the 1830s.

Muncietown continued to grow and the small county seat soon became the commercial center of the county. By 1837, Muncietown had a newspaper, *The Muncietonian*, which was published by David Gharkey, an early settler and local entrepreneur.⁹ A courthouse, along with other county and city buildings, were erected in the mid-to-late 1830s. Multiple businesses, shops, mills, and homes were built and the town continued to expand. In 1844, an estimated 467 people lived in the county seat.¹⁰ Muncietown received a name change in the mid-1840s. At that time, some of the local leaders thought that “Muncietown” had at least one too many syllables and that it should be shortened.¹¹ These leaders took this issue to the state legislature

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *The Indiana Gazetteer*, (Indianapolis: Douglass and Maguire, 1833), 60.

⁹ Wiley W. Spurgeon, Jr., *Muncie & Delaware County: An Illustrated Retrospective*, (Woodland Hills: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1984), 20.

¹⁰ Stoeckel, 16.

¹¹ Frank D. Haimbaugh, *History of Delaware County, Indiana, Volume I*, (Indianapolis: Historical Publishing Company, 1924), 426.

and on January 13, 1845, Muncietown became Muncie.¹² Two years later, the Indiana General Assembly officially incorporated Muncie into a town. While this piece of legislation was duly passed, it was not implemented until 1854 “when petitions were made and elections held for incorporation.”¹³

The population and physical size of Muncie continued to increase. By 1850, the county seat had reached over 800 inhabitants and was steadily growing.¹⁴ Along with a steady influx of people, came the railroad and telegraph. The first passenger train, a branch of the Indianapolis & Bellefontaine route, arrived in Muncie on May 31, 1852.¹⁵ This was a monumental event for the citizens of Muncie. On that inaugural day, five roundtrips were made from Muncie to Indianapolis, along with an extra trip to Yorktown.¹⁶ With the establishment of the railroad and the telegraph, Muncie became connected to the outside world.

In April 1864, a group of citizens voiced their opinion that Muncie should be incorporated as a city. The debate about whether or not to incorporate Muncie into a city went on for months. At a town board of trustees meeting, held in January 1865, a decision was made to conduct a “poll on February 2, 1865, to determine whether or not the town of Muncie should be incorporated into a city.”¹⁷ The poll was carried out on the aforementioned date and the end tally was 293 “yeas” and one “nay.” The town board ordered the town to be divided into four wards and for elections to be held for the positions of councilmen and other new city officials.¹⁸

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Stoeckel, 17.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Haimbaugh, 422.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Haimbaugh, 440.

¹⁸ Haimbaugh, 441.

The town of Muncie officially became the city of Muncie on March 2, 1865, when the record in the old town board minute book first used the heading “City of Muncie-Council Record.”¹⁹

The years prior to the American Civil War had been years of growth for Muncie, both in population and industry, but the 1860s proved to further improve the economic status of the city. During the 1860s, multiple turnpikes were built throughout Delaware County and connected the many farms and small towns with Muncie.²⁰ After the turnpikes were constructed, they were maintained by using various tolls.²¹ Farmers used the turnpikes to transport their crops from the fields to Muncie, which were then transported via railroads to larger markets throughout the state, region, and nation. The turnpikes made it easier for the rural residents of Delaware County to travel to Muncie to conduct business or engage in leisure activities.

From the time of the incorporation of Muncie into a city to the end of the nineteenth century, the county seat continued to develop. During the 1870s, two of Muncie’s most important economic operations were the pork-packing industry and the factories of James Boyce. The local pork-packing industry was a valuable operation to not only the city, but the many pork farmers of Delaware County. In an 1877 news article published in *The Muncie News*, it was reported that “there is not a more extensive pork-packing establishment in eastern Indiana than the one located in our midst. Over 23,000 hogs gave up the ghost...during the present season.”²² The article also said that the firm employed 150 people and shipped pork to New York and also foreign markets.²³ Not only was Muncie known for its pork-packing industry, but also led the region in the production of other agricultural goods, such as poultry, eggs, butter, and potatoes.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Spurgeon, 23.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Haimbaugh, 471.

²³ Ibid.

Along with the pork-packing industry, the factories of James Boyce helped transform Muncie from an agriculturally centered economy to an industrial one.

James Boyce, a native of Ireland, was one of Muncie's first industrialists. At age twelve, Boyce worked a twelve-hour shift in a linen factory in Ireland and earned eight cents per day.²⁴ After moving to the United States, he settled in Ohio and worked at a flax factory. Eventually, Boyce established his own flax factory and sold it for \$10,000.²⁵ With this money, he moved to Muncie in 1870. Once in Muncie, he established another flax factory and a machine handle factory. Boyce became one of Muncie's largest employers during the 1870s. Along with bringing new industry to the city, Boyce was also heavily engaged in civic improvements. Due to his significant level of influence in the community, he was a key player in getting sewer lines, fresh water lines, and electricity installed throughout the city.²⁶ Boyce was granted permission by the Muncie City Council to "erect poles and maintain wires in the streets for a private electric light plant for his mills and storerooms."²⁷ The first electric light was switched on in the Boyce Block Building on December 19, 1885. Boyce was also partly responsible for bringing the telephone to Muncie, which was first used in Muncie in 1880.²⁸

One of the most pivotal events in the history of Muncie in the latter-half of the nineteenth century was the discovery of large natural gas deposits. In 1876, natural gas was discovered on George Carter's Union Township farm, which was located several miles north of Muncie.²⁹ The drillers, who were actually boring for coal, feared that they had penetrated the "reaches of Hell" and that the foul-smelling substance which they had tapped was a "warning from Lucifer

²⁴ Spurgeon, 32.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Spurgeon, 35.

²⁷ Haimbaugh, 399.

²⁸ Haimbaugh, 397.

²⁹ Spurgeon, 29.

himself.”³⁰ The drillers capped the well and moved their boring efforts elsewhere. A few years later, the use of natural gas as a cheap source of fuel, light, etc. was realized and the “Gas Boom” of the late nineteenth century was born. Muncie and Delaware County profited greatly from the Gas Boom.

In 1886, the natural gas well on George Carter’s farm was reopened and many new wells drilled. By the end of 1886, natural gas distribution mains were laid in Muncie and there were seven gas companies serving Muncie and Delaware County.³¹ The city of Muncie bragged that “it had no coal or wood yards because an individual family could get all the fuel it needed in the form of natural gas for twelve dollars a year.”³² The use of natural gas as a fuel was not only used by local families, but also for businesses. The Muncie Board of Trade was established on February 24, 1887, to sell to the nation and the world the availability of natural gas to potential manufacturers and industrialists.³³ One such manufacturer to move to Muncie was the Ball Brothers Glass Company.

The Ball Family had a great economic and social impact on the city of Muncie. The Ball Brothers shared the spoils of their success because they had worked together to build their economic strength from the beginning of their business. The Ball Brothers were the sons of Lucius S. and Mary B. Ball and grew up on a farm in northern Ohio.³⁴ Lucius Ball was a mediocre farmer, but worked very hard to provide for his family. Due to a lack of success, the Ball Family had to sell their farm in Ohio and moved to upstate New York. Two of the brothers, Edmund B. and Frank C. Ball left the farm and went to Buffalo, New York, in hopes of starting a new life for themselves.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Spurgeon, 35.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Paul Rozycki, *Muncie, Indiana: People and Politics*, (Muncie: Ball State University, 1969), 3.

They started manufacturing fishing kits, but this proved to be unsuccessful. After this venture, they tried the carpet-cleaning business, but this ended in failure as well. The third attempt brought wealth to the two brothers. They started a business making wood-jacketed oil cans. This proved to be very successful and soon orders for their specialty oil cans were coming in from as far away as St. Louis and Milwaukee.³⁵ The other brothers, George, Lucius, and William, joined in on this business venture with Edmund and Frank and moved to Buffalo. The only problem that the Ball Brothers faced in their operation was the fact that many of the oil cans would break on the journey to their destinations. This led to the decision to establish a glass factory, which was opened in 1883.³⁶

The new glass factory produced glass home canning jars and other glass containers. All was well until a fire destroyed the brothers' glass factory in 1886.³⁷ It was during this time that the region of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois experienced the Gas Boom. Multiple natural gas fields were discovered in this region of the country, which provided inexpensive fuel in both the residential and industrial sectors of cities. The Ball Brothers heard about the abundance of natural gas in the Muncie area and received a personal invitation by local prominent businessman James Boyce to tour the city.³⁸ Frank Ball, acting as representative for the brothers, visited the city of Muncie in the summer of 1887 and was given a generous offer. The city agreed to furnish the land (seven acres) that the new factory would be built on, pay for the relocation of the factory equipment and workers from Buffalo to Muncie, and a private rail line.³⁹ The Ball Brothers

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Thomas A. Sargent, *The House and Its History: The E.B. and Bertha C. Ball Center for University and Community Programs*, (Muncie: Ball State University, 1989), 7.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Rozycki, 5.

accepted the offer and moved to Muncie. By 1893, the Ball Brothers' new glass factory in Muncie employed more than 1,000 people.⁴⁰

The economic growth continued during the 1890s. From 1880 to 1890, the population of Muncie grew from 5,219 to 11,345.⁴¹ A chief reason for the increase in Muncie's population was the influx of new factories and industries, which meant that there was a need for more workers in the city. On August 14, 1891, the Citizens Enterprise Company succeeded the Muncie Board of Trade.⁴² The following year, the Citizens Enterprise Company raised more than \$200,000 for a promotion fund to entice factories to either establish themselves or relocate to Muncie.⁴³ The promotion fund reaped large economic rewards for the city. Along with the Ball Brothers glass operations, came other new industries, such as a wagon works, a knitting mill, a gas engine company, and iron and steel mills.

The population of Muncie was 20,942 in 1900.⁴⁴ By looking at Muncie's history from its inception to the beginning of the twentieth century, one can see that Muncie grew from a small agricultural town into a large industrial center. The residents of Muncie largely consisted of factory workers. There were also many middle class families and a small echelon of upper class residents. The citizens, particularly the middle and upper classes, of Muncie wanted their city to prosper and have all of the modern conveniences. This ideal largely influenced the development of Muncie's public library.

The earliest records that denote the existence of a library in Muncie are two reports of the county librarian, covering the years 1838 to 1849 and 1849 to 1851.⁴⁵ These records were kept

⁴⁰ Sargent, 7.

⁴¹ Spurgeon, 38.

⁴² Haimbaugh, 461.

⁴³ Haimbaugh, 462.

⁴⁴ Spurgeon, 41.

⁴⁵ Stoeckel, 51.

by James Hodge, who was the county librarian. From these records, it can be surmised that a library of some sorts existed in Muncie in 1838, eleven years after the establishment of Delaware County. The records note that although this library was open to the general public, it was not free. Each subscriber had to pay fifty cents per year for the use of books.⁴⁶ During the early years of this county library, there was no official library building. Instead, the books and records were kept at the librarian's home and loaned from that location.⁴⁷ From 1838 to 1847, Hodge received twelve dollars a year for his services.⁴⁸ After 1847, Hodge was asked to serve as county librarian for free and the subscription rate was lowered to twenty-five cents per year. In March 1849, the library had fifty subscribers and 380 books.⁴⁹

In 1853, a state law was passed that required every county to establish a county library and house it in the county courthouse.⁵⁰ The law stated that one of the county officers was to act as librarian and that the library be maintained by using ten percent of the net proceeds from the sale of county property within the city limits.⁵¹ A library had already been established in Delaware County and was moved to the courthouse. Following the American Civil War, another law was passed in Indiana that called for the establishment of township libraries, which would work in tandem with the county libraries.⁵² At one point, the township library was housed in the county jail because the librarian was elected sheriff.⁵³ If people wanted to borrow books, they had to go to the jail because that was where the books were located. These township libraries were all but dissolved in the late 1860s due to an amendment to the previous law. The new

⁴⁶ James Hodge, Report of the County Librarian of Delaware County, March 5, 1849 and Report for February 24, 1851, DCA:BSU.

⁴⁷ "County Library," *Delaware County Democrat*, 19 July 1845.

⁴⁸ Stoeckel, 51.

⁴⁹ Stoeckel, 51.

⁵⁰ Feryl Sipe, *Middletown's Library*, (Muncie: Muncie Public Library, 1936), 5.

⁵¹ Elizabeth H. Middleton, *The First Seventy-Five Years: A Sketch of the Muncie Public Library, 1874-1949*, (Muncie: Muncie Public Library, 1949), 1.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Sipe, 6.

amendments legally ended the township library program because funds that were to be used for township libraries were diverted to the erection of the state normal school.⁵⁴ During this time, there were other libraries established in Muncie. These libraries were not sanctioned by the government, but by private individuals.

One of these independent libraries was referred to as the Workingman's Library. The Workingman's Libraries were instituted by William Maclure. Maclure was originally from Scotland and eventually settled in New Albany, Indiana. Maclure, for a period of time, worked with Robert Owen in the creation of the utopian town of New Harmony, Indiana. Owen wanted to create a place where "all were to be equal, including women, with no private property, but where all would receive an equal share of material and cultural rewards."⁵⁵ The community did not prosper and was abandoned in 1827. Upon his death in 1840, bequeathed \$72,000 for the creation of libraries for the working class within the state of Indiana.⁵⁶ The purpose of the Workingman's Library was to "be solely and only applied to the diffusion of useful knowledge by mutual instruction amongst the producing classes who labor with their hands, and gain their bread by the sweat of their brow."⁵⁷ There were a total of 160 such libraries established in Indiana.⁵⁸ It is important to note that these libraries were not constructed until twenty years after Maclure's death because of legal complications with his will.

Another library that was created in Muncie was referred to as the "Circulating Library." It was founded in 1868 by Henry C. Marsh, who was the local postmaster.⁵⁹ Marsh served as

⁵⁴ Haimbaugh, 336.

⁵⁵ Madison, 117.

⁵⁶ William E. Henry, *Municipal and Institutional Libraries of Indiana*, (Indianapolis: The Louisiana Purchase Exposition Commission of Indiana, 1904), 112.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Middleton, 2.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 1.

postmaster from 1866 to 1874.⁶⁰ Marsh bought new books with his own funds, combined them with his own private library, and housed this collection in the post office.⁶¹ During his tenure as postmaster, the post office was located in a corner room of a newspaper building on the northeast corner of Walnut and Washington Streets.⁶² Marsh had a collection of approximately 1,300 books.⁶³ These two libraries, along with the county and township libraries, experienced minimal success and by the beginning of the 1870s faced an uncertain future.

On May 30, 1874, the citizens of Muncie were called to a general meeting to organize a stock company to finance a new public library and reading room.⁶⁴ The meeting was conducted by Hamilton S. McRea, the local superintendent of public schools. Stock for the new library was sold at two dollars a share.⁶⁵ One of the largest buyers into the company was the city council, which bought \$3,600 worth of stock.⁶⁶ Many of the original stockholders were prominent business people, such as James Boyce.⁶⁷ The necessary funds were allocated and the new library was established in the east room on the second floor of the city building, which also housed other city government institutions such as the city's fire department. The new free public library opened on January 9, 1875, with 2,199 books from the former county and township libraries, along with the Workingman's Library and the "Circulating Library."⁶⁸ The first librarian was Hattie Patterson, who was paid \$250 a year and was also allowed to sell stationery in the library to supplement her income.⁶⁹ Two years after opening, the library had nearly 12,000 books.⁷⁰ In

⁶⁰ Haimbaugh, 456.

⁶¹ Middleton, 1.

⁶² Haimbaugh, 458.

⁶³ Haimbaugh, 337.

⁶⁴ Middleton, 2.

⁶⁵ Henry, 105.

⁶⁶ Middleton, 3.

⁶⁷ Haimbaugh, 337.

⁶⁸ Sipe, 8.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Haimbaugh, 337.

the mayor's report on the general welfare of Muncie in 1878, in talking about the public library, it says, "This extensive reading by the people cannot fail to have an influence for good, present and future, to the people and to the city."⁷¹

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the library had added over 10,000 more books to its collection and was desperately in need of a new home. The Commercial Club of Muncie was the first group of people to entertain the idea of writing to Andrew Carnegie and request that he fund the construction of a Carnegie Library in Muncie. This body was organized in the late 1890s and operated under the goal of "the promotion of the commercial and manufacturing interests and the general welfare of the city of Muncie and vicinity."⁷² The Commercial Club consisted of local businessmen and other social elites and was granted permission by the Muncie Public Library Board of Trustees to write to Carnegie.⁷³ The following is the letter that the Commercial Club wrote to Carnegie:

Muncie, Indiana, Feb. 27, 1901

Andrew Carnegie, Esq.

Dear Sir:--

We have been appointed as a committee of the Commercial Club of this city, to ask you for assistance in providing a public library for the city. We hope it will be convenient to you to investigate the conditions, which we believe will make the project worthy of a place in your splendid scheme of public benefactions.

We have a population of about 20,000 city and suburbs. It is a manufacturing city, and has grown from a substantial county seat with a population of 6,000 in twelve years to its present size. It has also, by public spirit, developed a permanent and progressive manner. We already have a fine beginning for a public library. If we had a building worth \$50,000 it could be liberally maintained and worthy of your noble efforts.

We would be glad to furnish any additional facts as to this project that may be desired.

Yours respectfully,
J. C. Johnson
James A. Daly

⁷¹ Haimbaugh, 338.

⁷² Haimbaugh, 464.

⁷³ Middleton, 6.

The letter was read by James Bertram and a response came on March 9, 1901. The following is Bertram's response to the Commercial Club's letter:

Hardin Roads, Esq.,
Muncie, Indiana

Dear Sirs:--

Yours of February 27th received. If the city of Muncie will furnish a suitable site and agree to maintain a free public library at a cost of not less than \$5,000 per year, Mr. Carnegie will be glad to give \$50,000 for a building.

Respectfully yours,
James Bertram, Secretary⁷⁵

On March 21, 1901, the city council accepted Carnegie's proposition and bought the southwest corner lot of Jackson Street and Jefferson Street for \$13,000.⁷⁶ A portion of the \$13,000 came from the generous donation of George W. Spilker. Spilker gave his home to the city and told the city council to sell it to help pay for the land. The house was sold for \$6,000, which meant that the city only had to pay \$7,000 to purchase the land for the Carnegie Library.⁷⁷

At this juncture, it is important to have an understanding of who Andrew Carnegie was and why he engaged in such philanthropic efforts. Andrew Carnegie was born in Dunfermline, Scotland in 1835.⁷⁸ When he was a young man, his family immigrated to the United States and settled in Pennsylvania. Carnegie had a variety of jobs and worked hard to improve his economic status. During the American Civil War, he helped organize the military telegraph department.⁷⁹ His major career interests were the railroad and steel industries. He became a millionaire from his work in these two industries. Over the course of thirty-six years, he

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Middleton, 7.

⁷⁶ Sipe, 9.

⁷⁷ Middleton, 7.

⁷⁸ Andrew Carnegie, *The Autobiography of Andrew Carnegie and The Gospel of Wealth*, (New York: Signet Classics, 2006), 7.

⁷⁹ George S. Bobinski, *Carnegie Libraries: Their History and Impact on American Public Library Development*, (Chicago: American Library Association), 9.

established and built up the successful Carnegie Steel Company, which he sold for a grand total of \$500,000,000 to fellow industrialist J.P. Morgan in 1901.⁸⁰ This transaction made Carnegie even wealthier, but this wealth would not all be spent on the finer things in life.

In *The Gospel of Wealth*, an essay written by Carnegie, the author discusses the role of the wealthy in helping improve society. It talks about how the wealthy person is best suited to engage in philanthropic efforts. Carnegie believed that it was the responsibility of the wealthy to provide funds to help better the “common man.” The following is an excerpt from the essay:

“...is held to be the duty of the man of Wealth: First, to set an example of modest, unostentatious living, shunning display or extravagance; to provide moderately for the legitimate wants of those dependent upon him; and after doing so to consider all surplus revenues which come to him simply as trust funds, which he is called upon to administer, and strictly bound as a matter of duty to administer in the manner which, in his judgment, is best calculated to produce the most beneficial result for the community-the man of wealth thus becoming the sole agent and trustee for his poorer brethren, bringing to their service his superior wisdom, experience, and ability to administer-doing for them better than they would or could do for themselves.”⁸¹

He also strongly believed that when it came time to distribute one’s wealth, the main consideration should be to help those who would help themselves.⁸² Carnegie wanted to help not only individuals, but communities as well. He believed that the best gift to a community was a free library because it meant that “he had succeeded in obtaining a pledge that the city would furnish sites and maintain the libraries forever.”⁸³

Over the course of his life, Carnegie donated \$56,162,622 for the construction of 2,509 libraries across various English-speaking countries in the world.⁸⁴ The first Carnegie Library was constructed in Carnegie’s hometown of Dunfermline, Scotland. In the United States, 1,679

⁸⁰ Bobinski, 10.

⁸¹ Carnegie, 333.

⁸² Carnegie, 334.

⁸³ Bobinski, 12.

⁸⁴ Bobinski, 3.

libraries were built in 1,412 communities at a cost of more than \$40,000,000.⁸⁵ Carnegie limited the library grants to English-speaking countries, primarily Great Britain and the United States, because he felt that these two countries had “already developed a general public library system and were, thus, the most promising fields for library philanthropy.”⁸⁶ He also believed that these two nations were “great sister republics struggling with the same problems of capital and labor, laws regulating commerce and manufacturing, taxation, improved housing for the poor, and education of the people.”⁸⁷ He wanted to see the citizens of Great Britain and the United States be prosperous and improve themselves. This could be accomplished through education and what better place to help foster education than the library.

The actual process that a community went through to get a Carnegie Library was carried out primarily by utilizing the mail system. A community wrote a letter to Andrew Carnegie and explained why they deserved a Carnegie Library. In some cases, communities requested not only a new library building, but also new city halls, gymnasiums, etc.⁸⁸ At first, the letters were read and acted upon by Carnegie himself, but as the library program grew, so did the number of requests. The letters had to answer various questions such as the community’s population, annual book circulation, how much the community was willing and able to tax itself for the annual support for the library, etc.⁸⁹ Due to the ever increasing amount of requests, Carnegie put James Bertram in charge of reading and responding to the many requests.

James Bertram was hired as Carnegie’s confidential secretary in 1897 and worked for the Carnegie Corporation until his death in 1934.⁹⁰ He was also from Scotland and had immigrated

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Bobinski, 38.

⁸⁷ Bobinski, 36.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Bobinski, 39.

⁹⁰ Bobinski, 25.

to the United States in the late nineteenth century.⁹¹ Bertram had the difficult responsibility of reading the thousands of requests that came in from around the United States and elsewhere and had to decide which communities received Carnegie Libraries. After he read a request, he wrote the community a letter which indicated if they were going to receive a Carnegie Library or not. Bertram was responsible for setting up the terms and conditions a community had to follow in order to get its new library building. One of the most important requirements for obtaining a Carnegie Library was that the community had to agree that ten percent of the donation received had to be spent annually on the maintenance of the library.⁹² In most cases, a minimum of at least \$1,000 was required for annual maintenance, which made it very difficult for small towns to qualify for the program.⁹³ Many requests were denied because they did not meet the necessary requirements to receive a Carnegie Library.

After an agreement was reached between Bertram/Carnegie and a community, the construction of the new library building started and progress reports were sent by the community to Bertram's office. The specified funds for the project were not sent in advance or in one large sum, but sent in smaller amounts as the work on the building developed.⁹⁴ Once the library was completed, Bertram required "an unmounted photograph of the front and side elevations along with a complete set of plans on a reduced scale."⁹⁵ This general process was conducted by cities and towns across the United States and Great Britain and led to the creation of many beautiful library buildings.

Indiana benefitted greatly from Carnegie's library philanthropy. The state of Indiana received more Carnegie Libraries than any other state in the entire country. In total, 164

⁹¹ Bobinski, 24.

⁹² Bobinski, 43.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Bobinski, 53.

⁹⁵ Bobinski, 52.

Carnegie Libraries were built in 155 Indiana communities.⁹⁶ Other states that also received a high number of Carnegie Libraries include California (142 libraries), Illinois (106), New York (106), and Ohio (105).⁹⁷ The city of Muncie was one of the 155 Indiana communities that received a Carnegie Library.

Carnegie not only influenced communities throughout the United States by assisting in the erection of new libraries themselves, but also influenced the model design of the public library. In the *Architectural Review's* 1902 compilation of the best modern library design, fifty-seven of the sixty-seven public libraries included were Classical in design. Of those sixty-seven public libraries, over forty percent were Carnegie Library designs, which meant that Carnegie had a significant role in defining the general outlay and design of a library in this country.⁹⁸ The general Carnegie designed library was more likely to include a children's room, reference rooms, and lecture halls. It was less likely to reserve a room for the use of the library board of trustees. "A direct comparison of the plans of Carnegie and non-Carnegie libraries reveals that Carnegie-financed buildings tended to put a greater emphasis on rooms devoted to public service."⁹⁹

The design for the Muncie Carnegie Library was done by the Wing and Mahurin Architectural Firm from Fort Wayne, Indiana, and the cornerstone was laid on June 1, 1902.¹⁰⁰ The library took nearly two years to build and cost a grand total of \$55,900.85. The following is an itemized list of construction costs:

Morrow and Morrow, General Contractors	\$46,970.85
Sutherland Mfg. Co. (electric fixtures)	\$2,500.00
Mandel Bros. (art glass)	\$750.00
Wing and Mahurin (architectural fees)	\$1,500.00

⁹⁶ Bobinski, 20.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Abigail Van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries & American Culture, 1890-1920*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 33.

⁹⁹ Van Slyck, 34.

¹⁰⁰ Bobinski, 20.

Cement Sidewalks	\$2,000.00
Miscellaneous	\$700.00
Total	\$55,900.85 ¹⁰¹

The library was constructed in the Neoclassical Revival style, which was a popular design for civic buildings during the first half of the twentieth century. On the main floor of the library, a stained glass rotunda dome was created and ornate Ionic pillars were erected on the outside and inside of the building. There was a reading room for children, as well as a general reading room and reference section. The library was dedicated on January 1, 1904.¹⁰² While the library itself was finished, there were no funds to furnish it. The city of Muncie solved this issue by sending a sterling silver spoon with an etching of the new library on it to Margaret Carnegie, Andrew Carnegie's daughter.¹⁰³ Andrew Carnegie was touched by this act of gratitude and gave \$5,000 to the community to furnish the new library.¹⁰⁴

The city of Muncie achieved its goal of getting a Carnegie Library. After the dedication, the library was open to the public and everyone living in Muncie had free access to its thousands of books. As advertized in the local newspaper, the library was open daily from 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM, except for Sundays and holidays.¹⁰⁵ On Sundays, the reading room was open from 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM. People that lived outside of the city limits could purchase a membership to the library for an annual fee of two dollars.¹⁰⁶ The years following the dedication and opening of the Carnegie Library were good and membership and circulation continued to climb. The Muncie Public Library and the city of Muncie had achieved its goal of obtaining a fine Carnegie library building.

¹⁰¹ Lewis C. Naylor, *A History of the Muncie Public Library*, (Muncie: Muncie Public Library, 1955), 5.

¹⁰² "Many Attended the Dedication," *The Muncie Evening Times*, 2 January 1904, 1.

¹⁰³ Sipe, 11.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ "Many Attended the Dedication," 1.

¹⁰⁶ Middleton, 8.

Over the course of the next century, the Muncie Public Library continued to grow with the establishment of multiple branches throughout the city. In 2003, while renovation work was being done on the Carnegie Library, old lending ledgers were discovered in the attic of the library by Dr. Frank Felsenstein. Felsenstein arranged to have these ledgers incorporated into a project that was titled *What Middletown Read*. This title is in reference to the sociological study conducted by Robert and Helen Lynd on Muncie during the 1920s, which was then published as *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture*. The recovered ledgers dated from 1891 to 1902 and contained priceless information about borrowers and what books were checked out during this time period. There are approximately 190,000 transactions recorded in the ledgers, which consist of 6,300 patrons and 13,700 titles. Currently, these ledgers are being digitized and will be available to the general public in 2010.

The ledgers are being analyzed with some interesting results. For instance, the primary users of the library were school children and women. Most of the recorded patrons belonged to the middle class. The most popular genres were fiction, travel, and history. A similar analysis has been conducted in Osage, Iowa. Although it is smaller in size, Osage is also a Midwestern city and had a public library by the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁷ The results from studying the lending ledgers from this city have yielded information similar to that found in the Muncie Public Library ledgers. The library patrons in Osage were mostly under the age of thirty.¹⁰⁸ Women and children, predominantly from the middle class, were the primary users of the library.¹⁰⁹ The same group of people were utilizing the library in Muncie. The most popular genre of the library patrons in Osage was fiction, just as it was in Muncie.

¹⁰⁷ James P. Danky and Wayne A. Wiegand, eds., *Print Culture in a Diverse America*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 174.

¹⁰⁸ Danky, 178.

¹⁰⁹ Danky, 196.

The libraries of Muncie and Osage will continue to be studied. I do not doubt that by studying the lending ledgers from the late nineteenth century, new information about life during this time period will be revealed. New understanding about book publishing and distribution in the United States will also be discovered. By studying the ledgers, historians and others will learn who used the library one hundred years ago and what they read. In the case of Muncie, by understanding the progressive nature of the city and its citizens, helps one comprehend how Muncie grew its library from simply being operated out of the librarian's home to the construction of the ornate Carnegie Library. The public library has become a crucial part of the social fabric of Muncie and deserves respect as a testament of civic pride, honor, and virtue.

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